

A Study on the Cultural Genes and Body Narratives of Shanxi Folk Dance from the Perspective of Yellow River Civilization

Yanan Yue

Conservatory of music, Shanxi College of Applied Science and Technology, Taiyuan 030000, Shanxi, China

Corresponding author: Yanan Yue (e-mail: 15536856850@163.com)

ABSTRACT As the mother and core of Chinese civilization, the Yellow River civilization nurtured rich folk art forms through longterm agricultural production, ritual practice, and regional cultural integration. This study reviews current folk dance research and identifies gaps at the intersection of civilization history and body philosophy. A comprehensive research framework integrating morphological analysis, textual research, and field investigation is then constructed. Through morphological extraction, historical tracing, and oral narrative analysis of fifteen representative Shanxi folk dances, the study reveals the genetic connection between Shanxi folk dance and the Yellow River civilization from three dimensions: agricultural customs, totem beliefs, and survival philosophy. The findings show that the body language of Shanxi folk dance is not an isolated combination of movements, but an embodied expression of collective memory. Core rhythms such as twisting, stepping, and trembling are isomorphic with agricultural production rhythms, while props and ritual settings continue ancient symbolic and sympathetic-magic thinking. The study further discusses the contemporary transformation of these cultural genes in modern society.

INDEX TERMS yellow river civilization, shanxi folk dance, cultural genes, body narrative, folk art

I. INTRODUCTION

THE Yellow River, with its ceaseless flow, has shaped the character and framework of Chinese civilization. Throughout its long history, the Yellow River basin has developed a complex civilization centered on agrarianism, where the interlacing of fibers and weaving of fabrics unified diverse ethnic cultures into a shared cultural tapestry. This mastery of craftsmanship became a fundamental pillar of the region's development, mirroring the intricate social and cultural integration of the river's people. Shanxi, as one of the core areas of this Yellow River civilization, possesses a geographically advantageous location that not only made it a strategically vital region but also a natural container for the fusion and accumulation of diverse cultures. The folk dances born on this land are far more than mere entertainment during festivals; they are dynamic epics etched onto the Loess Plateau, using the body as the brushstrokes to depict thousands of years of agricultural customs, ancestor worship, and celebrations of life. However, under the impact of modernization, these ancient body languages face a dual crisis of interrupted transmission and loss of meaning. Current academic research on folk dance largely focuses on morphological analysis, pedagogical discussions, or digital preservation techniques, rarely placing it within the broader historical context of the "Yellow River civilization" to

delve into its generative mechanisms and narrative logic as a "cultural gene." Based on this, this study proposes a dual analytical framework of "cultural genes" and "body narratives," attempting to transcend the boundaries of art studies and anthropology, and explore the cultural coding mechanism of Shanxi folk dance within the intersection of civilization history and bodily phenomenology. The study aims to answer the following core questions: How does the Yellow River civilization express and pass on through the bodily practice of Shanxi folk dance? What core cultural genes are contained within these dances? And how are they transformed and reconstructed in contemporary society? By exploring these questions, this study illuminates how the rhythmic mechanics of spinning and weaving inform the deep cultural structure of Chinese folk dance, providing a new perspective that grounds the localization of dance theory in the tactile traditions of production.

II. RELATED WORK

As an important carrier of intangible cultural heritage, the research dimension of folk dance is expanding from a single artistic ontology to a multi-dimensional cultural hermeneutics. Zhao [1] explored the necessity, current situation and existing problems of integrating traditional culture into the teaching of folk dance in colleges and universities,

aiming to find an effective integration path. Lei [2] explored how to apply ethnic folk dance elements in choreography techniques from a contemporary perspective, focusing on the integration of Dai folk dance with modernity. Lluar et al. [3] developed folk dance videos suitable for e-learning. These videos can effectively assist students in remote dance learning and provide feasible resources and practical experience for the digital teaching of folk dance. Zhang [4] solved the problem of the difficulty in distinguishing subtle differences in folk dance movement recognition and used deep learning technology to improve the accuracy and efficiency of movement recognition. Büyükgökoğlu and Uğuz [5] used the pose estimation algorithm in deep learning technology to analyze the performance videos of dancers.

Turan [6] explored the psychological endurance level of Turkish folk dance competitors. Tambe [7] used qualitative research methods to analyze the social construction, cultural politics and the living conditions of performers in Ravani dance. Wang [8] combined analysis of contemporary Chinese folk dance practice to explain its inherent spirituality, ritual sense and connection with religious beliefs. Cengiz et al. [9] explored the relationship between dance self-efficacy and self-confidence of folk dancers. Avsar [10] explored the role of participation in traditional Turkish folk dance in cultivating and enhancing individual self-confidence. Existing studies have failed to delve into the specific cultural and geographical space of the Yellow River civilization and explore the genetic connections of Shanxi folk dance. This study explores the cultural coding mechanism of Shanxi folk dance and its contemporary transformation path in the intersection of civilization history and body phenomenology, in order to provide a new direction for the localization of folk dance research theory construction.

III. METHODS

A. MORPHOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION AND RHYTHM EXTRACTION OF SHANXI FOLK DANCE

This study first systematically morphologically reviews the folk dances prevalent in Shanxi Province. Based on indicators such as movement style, prop usage, performance function, and geographical distribution, over thirty types of folk dances active in the over fifty counties and districts and districts covered by the survey were categorized. Building on this extensive research, more than ten dances with the widest distribution and most distinctive cultural characteristics were selected as core samples, including but not limited to the Kick-drum Yangge of northern Shanxi, the Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera of central Shanxi, the Wanrong Flower Drum of southern Shanxi, and the dance portion of the Jiangzhou Drum Music of the Hedong region. For each selected dance, a “core rhythm analysis method” was employed. Three or more senior inheritors were invited to demonstrate and explain the movements. The “core rhythms” extracted in this study are not mutually exclusive or isolated movement categories, but rather “basic movement elements” that can

be combined. In actual dance performances, these elements often appear simultaneously in compound forms, creating dynamic rhythmic patterns. Through summarizing and comparing these movement elements, four basic movement elements commonly found in most folk dances of Shanxi were ultimately identified: “twist,” “step,” “shake,” and “sway.” Among them, “twist” refers to the horizontal or vertical rotational movement of the torso (especially the waist); “step” refers to the powerful stomping of the feet on the ground; “shake” refers to the rapid, small-amplitude elastic vibration of joints (such as the knees and shoulders); and “sway” refers to the reciprocating swaying of the body’s center of gravity or the extremities. These elements are often presented in compound forms in specific dances; for example, “twist + shake” combined to form a wave-like undulation, and “step + sway” combined to form a swaying step. For example, Zuo Quan Xiaohua Opera is centered on the combination of “twisting” and “shaking.” Its rhythmic feature of “three-step knee shaking, undulating like waves” is not simply “twisting” or simply “shaking,” but a compound movement pattern in which the lateral twisting of the waist (“twisting”) and the rapid elastic flexion and extension of the knees (“shaking”) are performed simultaneously. On the other hand, Jin Beiyu Guzi Yangge is characterized by “stomping,” emphasizing the powerful stomping of the feet. Its power generation method is analyzed as the instantaneous impact force from the waist and back being transmitted to the heels [11,12]. This compound classification framework avoids the theoretical defects of forcibly breaking down compound movements into mutually exclusive categories, and lays a more realistic morphological foundation for subsequent analysis of the correspondence between body language and cultural genes.

B. TRACING THE ORIGINS OF CULTURAL GENES BASED ON TEXTUAL RESEARCH

After completing the morphological analysis, the research turned to the historical origin of the cultural genes behind the dance. At this stage, the literature research method was mainly adopted. More than 120 kinds of relevant historical materials, including county annals, prefectural annals, inscriptions and notes of literati from the Ming and Qing dynasties, which involve local customs, festivals, rituals, production and life in Shanxi, were consulted and sorted out. The core of the research is to establish the connection between body form and civilization connotation, that is, to find the historical connection between the core movement rhythms and dance routines extracted above and the specific cultural elements of the Yellow River civilization. In terms of specific operation, the strategy of “mutual textual verification” was adopted. For example, in response to the “circular” movement and “S-shaped” swaying that are common in dance, the researchers searched for records of “worshipping the heavens at the round mound” and “welcoming the qi in accordance with the seasons” in the classics such as “Book of Rites: Monthly Ordinances”, and compared them with

the music and dance images in the existing temple murals in Shanxi to explore the intrinsic connection between them and the ancient agricultural sacrifices of “following the seasons” and “the flow of yin and yang” in the worldview [13]. For example, regarding the props such as drums, umbrellas, and fans held by dancers in Wanrong Flower Drum, this study searched for their early forms in Han Dynasty stone carvings and Dunhuang murals from the Tang and Song Dynasties. Combining this with the description of “beating the drum” in the “Book of Songs” (specifically, the “Chen Feng” section), it traced their evolution from primitive instruments for communicating with heaven and earth to props for folk entertainment. Through the mutual corroboration of documents and artifacts, the study gradually outlined the cultural genes inherent in Shanxi folk dances, including agricultural customs, totem worship, and ancestor rites.

C. CONTEMPORARY DECODING OF FIELDWORK AND BODY NARRATIVE

In order to capture the living characteristics of Shanxi folk dance in the contemporary context and the subjective interpretation of the inheritors, this study also conducted a four-month field survey. The survey route followed the east bank of the Yellow River, from north to south, covering eleven traditional villages under the jurisdiction of four prefecture-level cities: Xinzhou, Lüliang, Linfen, and Yuncheng. The survey method mainly consisted of in-depth interviews and participant observation. The research team interviewed a total of twenty-three national, provincial, and municipal/county-level intangible cultural heritage inheritors, with an average interview duration of more than ninety minutes. The interview content focused on two levels: first, the oral transmission of dance techniques, inquiring about the key points of movements, teaching formulas, and personal unique understanding of physical expression, in order to explore the “body knowledge” experience behind the physical techniques. Second, the symbolic interpretation of the meaning of dance, listening to the inheritors talk about the relationship between dance and local festivals, beliefs, and life customs, as well as the emotions and spiritual sustenance they themselves experienced in dance [14,15]. For example, in an interview with an elderly artist of Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera, he mentioned that “the twisting should be lively, like willows swaying in the spring breeze, or like fish in the river.” This vivid metaphor provides a key clue to understanding the life consciousness behind the movement of “twisting.” In terms of participant observation, the research team participated in three folk activities, including a rural “Shehuo” performance and two temple fair ceremonies, experiencing firsthand the complete process and atmosphere of dance in its native environment. All interview recordings have been transcribed into written materials, which, together with onsite notes and video materials, form the basis of the qualitative analysis of this study. The aim is to decode the living expression and meaning reproduction process of bodily narratives in contemporary times from a

thematic perspective.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. BODILY IMPRINTING OF AGRICULTURAL CUSTOMS: THE ISOMORPHISM OF CORE MOTION RHYTHMS AND PRODUCTION RHYTHMS

The research results indicate that the core rhythms of Shanxi folk dances have a significant isomorphic relationship with the long-standing agricultural production rhythms of the Yellow River Basin. Analysis of the rhythms of fifteen sample dances revealed that “stepping” and “trembling,” two rhythms originating from the perception of the earth, are the most prevalent. Stepping and stomping are common elements in folk dances around the world and are not unique to Shanxi. However, the uniqueness of the “stepping” rhythm in Shanxi folk dance does not lie in the act of “stepping” itself, but in the highly isomorphic relationship between its specific force exertion, frequency combination, body coordination pattern and the “treading-stability” physical experience in local loess slope agriculture. Their distribution correlates with the crop planting structure and landform characteristics of different regions in Shanxi, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Correlation between the distribution of core rhythms in Shanxi folk dances and agricultural landforms

Dance distribution area	Representative dance styles	Core Rhythm	Dynamic characteristics description	de-Main agricultural landform types	Related crops/production activities
Loess area in northern Shanxi	hilly Kick dance	the step, kick and Yangko	Its “stepping” action is characterized by the heel touching the ground first, followed by an instantaneous explosive force to stomp down, while simultaneously kicking forward.	Loess ridges and ravines	For drought-resistant miscellaneous grains (millet, sorghum), the land should be prepared and compacted in spring.
Jinzhong Basin	Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera	Xi-trembling	Twisting, continuous elastic flexion and extension of the knees	River valley terraces, piedmont plains	Corn and wheat rotation, frequent turning during field management and harvesting
Emei Ridge in Southern Shanxi	Wanrong Flower Drum	Jump, stomp	Jump with alternating feet, stomping the ground forcefully with the entire sole of the foot upon landing.	Loess plateau, flat terrain	The rhythm of labor on the cotton and wheat planting and threshing grounds
Riverside area in the east	“Back ice”	Ting, Zhen	Keep your back straight, walk steadily, and feel the overall vibration.	Yellow River floodplains and alluvial plains	Located near the Yellow River, it is closely related to collective labor such as river management and flood control.

*Note: Carrying Ice is a unique folk dance form that originated in Yongji, Shanxi Province. Performers carry blocks of ice on their backs while naked.

As shown in Table 1, the rhythmic movements of “stepping” and “kicking” in the Yangko dance performed in the Loess Hilly Region of northern Shanxi Province, characterized by “heel-first landing and instantaneous stomping,” are highly consistent with the stomping movements performed by local farmers on slopes to stabilize their center of gravity while planting drought-resistant crops. This consistency does not simply mean that “stepping originates from the terrain,” but rather indicates that long-term repetitive physical experiences within a specific geographical and livelihood context provide a valuable “body schema” for the stylization of dance movements. In the Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera of

the Jinzhong Basin, “twisting” and “trembling” recreate the physical dynamics of people working in dense cornfields or wheat fields; the twisting of the waist yields to the crops, and the trembling of the knees cushions the unevenness of walking between the ridges. From a developmental perspective, “twisting” and “trembling” primarily originate from the physical habits developed during intensive agricultural labor in the Yellow River basin: when walking in corn or wheat fields, the body needs to sidestep crops, twist the waist to maintain balance, and continuously flex and extend the knees to cushion the impact of the uneven ground between rows. This long-term repetitive labor formed unconscious “body schemas,” constituting the prototype basis of the movements. However, in the artistic process of dance, the inheritors do not mechanically reproduce labor movements, but consciously connect them with natural objects—as the old artists say, “like willows swaying in the spring breeze, or fish swimming in the river.” This metaphor reveals a second generative level: natural imitation. It serves the sublimation of aesthetic expression and life consciousness, transforming arduous physical labor into a light, fluid, poetic body language. Therefore, the “twisting” and “trembling” of Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera have a dual identity: the imprint of labor is the deep structure of its cultural genes (answering “where do the movements come from”), while natural imitation is the surface encoding of its bodily narrative (answering “how are the movements perceived and transmitted”). The two are not opposites, but correspond to the “functional layer” and “symbolic layer” of bodily experience, respectively, together forming a complete transformation chain from “physical labor” to “body art”. Furthermore, interviews with twenty-three inheritors revealed that seventeen of them unanimously used agricultural metaphors when describing the dance’s key points, such as “rooting like hoeing” and “having the strength of winnowing.” Four other performers used metaphors of natural phenomena (such as “flowing like water” and “howling like mountain winds”), while the remaining two focused on the aesthetic expression of movement (such as “jumping with joyful energy”). Despite individual differences in expression, agricultural metaphors dominated among the inheritors (accounting for 73.9%). This linguistic connection further confirms that the physiological memory of agricultural production has been internalized as a primary, but not the only, unconscious “body schema,” and is aesthetically manifested in dance. This proves that the core rhythm of Shanxi folk dance is essentially the imprint left on laborers by thousands of years of agricultural civilization in the Yellow River basin, a process of transforming productivity into aesthetic “rhythm.” Meanwhile, it is also noted that the ice-carrying dance in southern Shanxi does not exhibit strong “jumping” or “twisting” characteristics, but rather focuses on steady movement. This is closely related to the physical experience of collective labor in flood control and water management in the Yellow River floodplain, and also illustrates that the influence of different geographical environments on dance

rhythm is multidimensional and specific. This proves that the core rhythm of Shanxi folk dance is essentially the imprint left on laborers by thousands of years of agricultural civilization in the Yellow River basin. It is a process of transforming productivity into aesthetic “rhythm,” but this transformation is not a simple linear determination, but a complex that gradually forms through cultural transmission, borrowing, and integration in different regions.

B. SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION OF TOTEM BELIEF: SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION OF PROPS AND VENUE

Research has found that the props and specific performance venues frequently used in Shanxi folk dances are not arbitrary artistic decorations, but rather symbolic remnants of ancient totem beliefs and sympathetic shamanistic thinking. Most of the contemporary inheritors interviewed in this study do not explicitly hold a systematic belief in animism; however, the way dance props are used and the ritual norms have retained their symbolic logic in historical transmission, and some elderly inheritors can still verbally express vague concepts related to “exorcising evil” and “praying for blessings”. Through functional analysis and historical tracing of the three core props in the dances—“umbrella,” “drum,” and “fan”—it was discovered that they together constitute a symbolic system for communicating with heaven and earth and praying for abundance (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Symbolic Functions and Historical Origins of Core Props in Shanxi Folk Dance

Item type	Representative dance styles and prop forms	Ritual Function and (Explanation by Contemporary Successors)	Symbolic Meaning (Decoding by Cultural Genes)	Historical Evidence	documents/image evidence
umbrella	The umbrellas in the umbrella-head Yangko dance are decorated on their tops.	in “To guide the way,” “to ward off evil and disaster,” and “to gather popularity.”	The Cosmic Tree; canopy symbolizes celestial dome, and handle symbolizes the connecting heaven and earth.	Dome of the Celestial Palace; the Voice of the Earth Mother: The drum beats mimic spring thunder, and the “drum” was a sacrificial offering, motivating the growth of all things.	The description of “Jianmu” in the Classic of Mountains and Seas; the concept of “Tianji” worship reflected the ritual objects unearthed at the axis Taosi site (Longshan Culture) in Xi-angfen, Shanxi.
drum	Wanrong Drum (Waist Drum)	Flower Drum beats “The gods,” “Boost morale,” and “Proclaim bountiful harvest.”	thunderous awaken der God and the Earth Mother: The drum beats mimic spring thunder, and the “drum” was a sacrificial offering, motivating the growth of all things.	The Weapon of the Thunder God and the Voice of the Earth Mother: The drum beats mimic spring thunder, and the “drum” was a sacrificial offering, motivating the growth of all things.	In the Book of Changes, the hexagrams are interpreted as thunder and lightning; in the oracle bone and bronze inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty, the “drum” was a sacrificial offering, clearly records “using thunder drums to rouse the gods in sacrifices.”
fan	The colorful fans in Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera are mostly made of double-layered silk.	in “Like butterflies fluttering,” “Bringing a gentle breeze,” and “Fanning away bad luck.”	The breath of life and the spirit of the valley move: the fan’s movement simulates airflow, symbolizing the breath of life, and the fluttering of the fan sur- faces resembles the leaves and flowers of crops.	Winged figures holding fans in Han Dynasty stone carvings; the custom of using fans to summon deities during Taoist rituals during the Tang and Song Dynasties; and images of winged figures holding fans in Han Dynasty portrait stones unearthed in Lishi, Shanxi and other places.	

As shown in Table 2, a more cautious interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the “umbrella” in the Umbrella Sheep Dance is needed. The inheritors emphasize that the umbrella can “ward off evil and disaster,” suggesting its origin may be related to the ancient “nuoyi” ritual. Although more direct evidence is needed to directly equate it with the “cosmic tree,” the shape of the umbrella echoes the mythical “cosmic tree,” suggesting it may carry the cultural metaphor of a “divine pillar” connecting heaven and earth in the performance. Similarly, the drum’s central position

in different dance styles stems from its sound imitating “thunder.” In the field survey, only two inheritors who are over 70 years old clearly associate drumming with “calling Raytheon” and “begging for rain”, while the others describe the function of drums as “boosting morale” or “announcing important events”. However, combined with the record that the divination in Zhouyi “shocked a hundred miles” and the record that “drum” was sacrificed in Oracle Bone Inscriptions in Shang Dynasty, it can be inferred that the deep cultural gene of drum originated from the call for the power of Raytheon from the perspective of ancient animism, and its core wish was to pray for good weather. Although this historical logic has not been completely preserved in the discourse system of contemporary inheritors, it has been partially continued through the practice of “drumming must be at the core of temple fairs or social fires”. From an animistic perspective, drumming is not merely about making sound, but also about summoning the power of the thunder god and praying for favorable weather. This interpretation is strongly supported by records in documents such as the Zhou Li regarding the drum’s core function in state sacrificial rites. The light and graceful movements of the fan imply the function of attracting “life force,” which coincides with the core desire for abundant harvests and thriving livestock. The frequent appearance of images of “feathered figures holding fans” in Han Dynasty stone reliefs unearthed in Shanxi provides regional visual evidence for the symbolic function of fans in guiding “qi” from the celestial realm. The use of these props transforms abstract beliefs into visible, tangible, and perceptible bodily practices and visual symbols, making each dance a symbolic dialogue with deities, nature, and ancestors. The performance venues are often chosen in temples, threshing grounds, or village centers, which also emphasizes their dual significance as sacred spaces and hubs of public life.

C. THE BODILY REFLECTION OF EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY: THE CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATION AND DILEMMA OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Against the backdrop of contemporary social transformation, the survival philosophy and collective memory embodied in Shanxi folk dance are undergoing profound transformation, while also facing unprecedented challenges in its transmission. Research through fieldwork revealed, as shown in Table 3, a significant difference in understanding the value of dance between the younger generation of inheritors and veteran artists. This generational gap in understanding directly impacts the living transmission of folk dance.

TABLE 3. Comparative Analysis of the Value Perceptions of Shanxi Folk Dance by Inheritors of Different Generations

Cognitive Dimensions	Older generation of inheritors (55 years and older, N=11)	Young generation of successors/learners (18-35 years old, N=12)	Analysis of significant differences (chi-square test)
Primary value recognition	Reverence for gods and ancestors, community cohesion, and continuation of old traditions	Physical exercise, performance, development/further education	$\chi^2 = 15.27$, $p < 0.01$
The meaning of dance movements	The older generation passed down their knowledge through observation, imitating nature and labor (such as “watching sheep fight” and “learning to plow”).	Learning from video platforms aims for standardized, aesthetically pleasing movements with	$\chi^2 = 12.03$, $p < 0.01$
Attitude towards props/rituals	Filled with reverence, with strict procedures before use, it was regarded as a sacred object.	Treated as stage props, emphasizing their decorative and visual effects.	$\chi^2 = 9.84$, $p < 0.05$
Views on the future	Fearing the art will be lost, they hope to preserve it “in its original form”.	We hope to innovate, incorporate modern elements, and attract more audiences.	$\chi^2 = 10.56$, $p < 0.01$

Table 3 clearly reveals the structural differences in inter-generational perceptions. The older generation of inheritors views dance as a medium for spiritual communication with deities, ancestors, and the land, its significance rooted in specific agricultural customs and community relationships. For them, dance is a “physical practice” of collective memory, a bond maintaining village social order and emotional connections. However, in the younger generation’s cognitive system, the value of folk dance shifts more towards “aesthetics” and “instrumentality.” They access and learn dance through new media such as short videos, focusing more on the technical difficulty of movements, visual expressiveness, and its practical value in real-world scenarios such as education and employment. In an interview, a young learner bluntly stated, “If you dance well, you can get on TV and get extra points—that’s its value.” This shift in perception, on the one hand, brings innovation to the dissemination of folk dance, allowing it to break through geographical limitations and enter a wider market; but on the other hand, it may also lead to the detachment of dance from its original cultural soil, causing its deep-seated “cultural genes”—those emotions about reverence, prayer, and community—to be diluted or even forgotten in the pursuit of “stage effects.” This separation of “meaning” and “form” is precisely the core tension faced by Shanxi folk dance and even the entire Chinese intangible cultural heritage in contemporary times.

In response to this contradiction, this study argues that the shift from “ritualistic” to “aesthetic” is not a simple matter of success or failure, but rather a dialectical cultural evolution requiring active guidance. On the one hand, the younger generation’s pursuit of aesthetic value, career development, and media-driven dissemination has indeed injected new vitality into folk dance, enabling its wider spread in the wave of globalization and digitalization. For example, Zuoquan Xiaohua Opera attracted millions of young viewers through the “fan dance challenge” on short video platforms, which is itself a successful adaptive evolution. However, on the other hand, if this transformation comes entirely at the expense of ritual symbolism and community emotion, it may lead to dance becoming an empty “body technique,” losing its core identity as a carrier of the collective memory of the Yellow River civilization. Therefore, we propose a

“dynamic preservation” strategy: neither rigidly adhering to the “original form” nor blindly catering to the market, but encouraging innovation in form and dissemination methods while preserving core cultural genes (such as the agricultural rhythm contained in “twisting” and the celestial symbolism contained in “umbrella”). This stance avoids binary judgments of either/or and provides a more dialectical and feasible path for the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage.

V. CONCLUSION

Starting from the grand perspective of the Yellow River civilization, this study systematically explores the cultural genes and bodily narratives of Shanxi folk dance by analyzing how the rhythmic precision of weaving and spinning informs physical movement through morphological analysis, textual research, and field investigation. These inspired motor patterns provide a foundational lens for understanding the regional identity and structural evolution of the dance forms. The study draws the following core conclusions: First, Shanxi folk dance is not an isolated art form, but rather a bodily imprint of the Yellow River agricultural civilization. Its core rhythms, such as “twisting,” “stepping,” and “trembling,” share a deep isomorphism with the rhythms of agricultural production and regional topographical features, representing the aesthetic crystallization of laborers’ bodily experiences over thousands of years. Second, the props and settings of Shanxi folk dance constitute a complete system of symbolic belief expression. Props such as umbrellas, drums, and fans are not merely simple decorations, but totemic symbols that communicate with heaven and earth and pray for abundance; they are living remnants of sympathetic shamanistic thinking in bodily art. Third, Shanxi folk dance is a contemporary carrier of collective memory, and its transmission exhibits profound internal tension in contemporary society. The significant differences in value perception between the older and younger generations of inheritors reflect the transformation of folk dance from a “ritualistic” existence to an “aesthetic” existence. This process presents both opportunities and the risk of its cultural core being stripped away.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yanan Yue designed, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Yanan Yue conducted the study, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval of the version to be published. Yanan Yue participated fully in the work, take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

FUNDING

This research was supported by, 2024 Shanxi Province Higher Education Teaching Reform and Innovation Project: “Research on Teaching Practice of Shanxi Folk Dance in Higher Education from the Perspective of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education”.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not applicable.

REFERENCES

- [1] B. Zhao, “Research on the integration of traditional culture into the teaching of folk dance in colleges and universities,” *Art and Performance Letters*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 17-20, 2022, doi: 10.23977/artpl.2022.030304.
- [2] X. Lei, “The Application of Ethnic Folk Dance Elements in Choreographic Techniques from a Contemporary Perspective-Exploring the Fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and Modernity,” *Pacific International Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 93-97, 2024, doi: 10.55014/pij.v7i2.578.
- [3] L. Llupar M, L. Malones L J, F. Sombria A J, et al., “Development of folk-dance videos for e-learning,” *Indonesian Journal of Teaching in Science*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1-6, 2022, doi: 10.17509/ijotis.v2i1.41586.
- [4] N. Zhang, “A deep learning-based method for identifying differences in folk dance movements,” *Journal of Computational Methods in Sciences and Engineering*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 2334-2346, 2025, doi: 10.1177/14727978241312996.
- [5] E. Büyükgökoğlu and S. Uğuz, “Development of a performance evaluation system in Turkish folk dance using deep learning-based pose estimation,” *Tehnički vjesnik*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 1817-1824, 2025, doi: 10.17559/TV-20241218002203.
- [6] Z. Turan, “Investigation of mental endurance levels of Turkish folk dance competition athletes according to various variables,” *Turkish Journal of Sport and Exercise*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 498-510, 2024, doi: 10.15314/tsed.1471522.
- [7] A. Tambe, “Folk dance/vulgar dance: erotic lavani and the hereditary performance labour,” *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 153-166, 2023, doi: 10.1080/19472498.2022.2142899.
- [8] Y. Wang, “Spiritual Significance and Religious Dimensions in the Inheritance and Development of Contemporary Chinese Folk Dance,” *European journal for philosophy of religion*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 214-229, 2024, doi: 10.24204/ejpr.2024.4040.
- [9] C. Cengiz, M. Erduran, and T. Bozkus, “Investigation of the relationship between dance self-efficacy and self-confidence of folk dancers,” *International Journal of Education Technology and Scientific Researches*, vol. 8, no. 21, pp. 89-110, 2023, doi: 10.35826/ijetsar.575.
- [10] Z. Avsar, “Enhancing Assertiveness through Traditional Turkish Folk Dance,” *Online Submission*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 202-211, 2023, doi: 10.46966/ijae.v4i3.346.
- [11] T. Lobo J, “Is folk dance still thriving? Personal experience and interest in philippine traditional dances as a basis on strengthening the love for culture and the arts,” *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 48-60, 2022, doi: 10.58557/ijeh.v2i2.82.
- [12] F. Guang and Z. Xueliang, “Research on the impact mechanisms of immersive virtual reality technology in enhancing the effectiveness of higher folk dance education: Base on student perspective,” *Education and Information Technologies*, vol. 30, no. 11, pp. 15467-15505, 2025, doi: 10.1007/s10639-025-13413-y.
- [13] X. Cai, T. Wang, R. Lu, et al., “Automatic generation of Labanotation based on human pose estimation in folk dance videos,” *Neural Computing and Applications*, vol. 35, no. 35, pp. 24755-24771, 2023, doi: 10.1007/s00521-023-08206-8.
- [14] M. Sabau A, S. Oros, M. Pantea D, et al., “Aspects of the practice of folk dance in Bihor Region-Tradition and perspectives,” *Geosport for Society*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 23-37, 2022, doi: 10.30892/gss.1603-081.
- [15] C. Wu, F. Abu Bakar M, and V. Boo H, “Aesthetics of hui folk dance as audience service to leverage audience satisfaction,” *International Journal of Service Management and Sustainability (IJSMS)*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 125-144, 2022, doi: 10.24191/ijms.v7i1.17783.